

Tara-Leeway Heights Civic Association (TLHCA)

Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting May 15, 2024

- 1) The Board of Directors of the Tara-Leeway Heights Civic Association (TLHCA) met by Zoom at 7:00 PM, Wednesday, May 15, 2024. Members present and constituting a quorum were John Ford (President), Laura Stout (Vice-President), John Richardson (Secretary), Irene Szopo (Treasurer), Bill Braswell, Michelle Winters, John Vihstadt, Eric Massant, and Matt Fleming. Arlington County Board Member Takis Karantonis was present by invitation. Other CA members in attendance were Greg Perrett, Ann Speicher, Cheryl Hatch, Jon Ware, James LNU, and Ray Keaney.

- 2) Comments by Takis Karantonis: The President invited visiting Arlington County Board Member Takis Karantonis to speak, noting that Mr. Karantonis deserved special thanks from the association for his vigorous and ultimately successful efforts to obtain a four-way stop sign at Patrick Henry Dr. and N. 18th St., a long-fought goal of TLHCA. (Mr. Ford noted that he had also extended an invitation to attend the meeting to Dan Nabors, the County traffic chief, who installed the stop sign but who was unable to participate.). Mr. K. said that a critical element in the successful stop sign campaign was a change in the December 2023 national traffic guidelines to include “community input,” even if traffic statistics might not permit desired changes; TLHCA’s advocacy met that criterion, and the federal rules trump local ones. He noted that anomalies still exist, such as different speed limits posted on the opposite directions of Carlin Springs Rd. He said that on the County Board he is “taking the lead” on traffic safety issues. A propos of EHO/Missing Middle housing legislation, Mr. K. said that while conflicting legislation is underway, potential builders are waiting to see which way things go. He said that the County’s cap on total conversions/year (80) has meant that at present, only one such project is underway, although 30 permits have been issued vs. 53 underway for single-family structures. Mr K. said that he is pushing for a study of housing/zoning statistics to obtain “lessons learned” from the process.
In response to a question, Mr. K. said that little data is available about “ADU”s” (Additional Dwelling Units) now authorized for addition to the principal residence. Arlington’s strong rental market is one factor depressing applications for other types of property conversions such as B&B’s.

Concerning new county legislation related to storm water management, Mr. K. said that new rules about land disturbance are “very strong” and encourage creation of rain gardens, rain barrels, and other mitigation devices. He said that the July 2019 Westover flood had a “major impact” on thinking about storm-water abatement. He acknowledged that churches and other nonprofits with extensive land area are unhappy with the storm water fees, which have a disproportional impact on them. The permitting process puts no obligation on builders to advise neighbors of changes, a legacy of the “by right” Arlington process favoring builders.

Mr. K. urged TLHCA members to send the County Board our reviews of the new 4-way stop sign, since they are helpful in justifying such steps as are taken. It was agreed that a TLHCA board statement would be in order.

- 3) Treasurer’s Report: Irene Szopo gave the Treasurer’s report, noting that 24 members have paid annual dues since the hand-delivered newsletter went out. About half use PayPal and half write checks.
- 4) Newsletter Advertising: Mr. Ford raised the topic of advertising in the TLHCA newsletter. Several members recalled that in the past there was such advertising, but not in recent years. Sima Nasr and Laura Stout commented on advertising’s utility in “community building” as well as providing revenue. Others beside local businesses are potential customers. Several directors endorsed encouraging newsletter advertising, but no action was taken.
- 5) Westover Day: The President reported that the second Westover Day will be held the afternoon of Saturday, September 21 on the Cardinal School Grounds. The other participants in last year’s event are enthusiastic about a repeat, as is Colin Brown, Cardinal School Principal, who promised again opening the school for tours. Local businesses like Westover Taco and Tobey’s Ice Cream have signed on to participate. Several speakers urged inclusion of local artists who would sell their work.
- 6) Neighborhood Lists: Michelle Winters reported the existence of a list of street addresses for ca. 435 TLH residents, albeit without names. The hard copy newsletter is delivered once annually to ca. 800 addressees, whether they are TLHCA members or not. There was general discussion about the need for TLHCA to strengthen the ways it communicates with CA members and residents

- 7) VHC: Mr. Ford reported on a new Virginia Hospital Center (VHC) building project at N. Edison and N. 16th St. that is proving controversial. It would add “several stories” to the Emergency Room Building and have a flat roof.
- 8) Elections/Bylaws: the President raised what proved to be a complex but important issue: TLHCA elections and bylaws, focusing first on Jon Ware, who is interested in joining the board and becoming a TLHCA delegate to the Civic Federation. Mr. Richardson pointed out that TLHCA has not been conducting its affairs, including elections, as required by the CA bylaws and that it is advisable for the board to examine the bylaws in order to streamline them and make it easier for the CA to conduct its business in accordance with the bylaws. Mr. Richardson also suggested that since the CA is not in compliance with its rules of conduct, we should consider the bylaws in abeyance for the time being so that we can make necessary changes before re-establishing “regular order,” perhaps in the fall. The board established a bylaws committee consisting of Jon Ware, John Vihstadt, John Richardson, and Bill Braswell. The president noted that Mr. Ware had already done preliminary work on bylaws revision, a copy of which was made available. It was agreed to schedule a special board meeting to elect TLHCA 2024-2025 officers and directors and to elect Jon Ware as an Alternate Civic Federation Delegate. Notification of the elections will be made by email to the membership.
- 9) Next Meeting: It was agreed that the next TLHCA general meeting will be held Wednesday, September 11, perhaps by Zoom, although there is sentiment in favor of re-establishing in-person meetings.
- 10) There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:30 PM.

Respectfully Submitted, John P. Richardson, Secretary